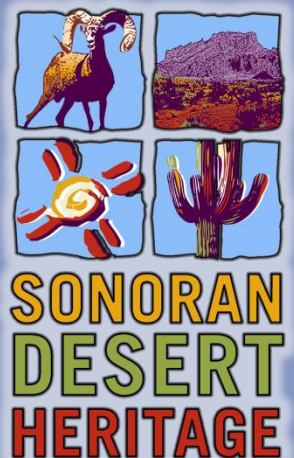


# Campaign Status Report

## Support and Progress

June 2012



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## Background

For about five years now, a group of diverse stakeholders have collaborated to develop the Sonoran Desert Heritage (SDH) proposal, a community-inclusive vision for western Maricopa County that will conserve the natural and cultural resources of the region while protecting the viability of nearby military facilities and allowing for economic development to continue and prosper. The proposal is primarily focused on the conservation of existing Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land at the urban-rural interface, charting a course for congressional protection of these lands through a variety of designations that will sustain future environmental services, recreational opportunities, and natural amenities contributing to the quality of life of the region's residents.

Over the past two decades, rapid population growth has brought prosperity and challenges to western Maricopa County. The Sonoran Desert Heritage proposal recognizes the importance of sustaining this growth into the future with a balanced set of actions intended to maintain the health and beauty of our communities. A core premise of the proposal is the belief that conservation measures on appropriate and existing public lands are a key ingredient to maintaining the attractiveness and health of our built environment – that development and conservation are not at odds, but rather partners in growing and sustaining our vibrant communities.

## *The Need for Conservation*

Conservation of federal land in western Maricopa County is necessary for a variety of reasons. First, the values that these federal lands provide to the local economy cannot be denied—lands kept in public ownership and conserved for recreation, open space, and natural resources provide significant economic and social benefits to local and regional economies. Secondly, the BLM land within the SDH proposal houses the low level military training routes (MTRs) that keep Luke Air Force Base and the Barry M. Goldwater Range viable. Without these unencumbered open spaces, operations that are critical to national defense and military readiness could not be sustained as increasing development pressure and incompatible uses may force the closure of one or more of the critical installations that Arizonans are proud to support.

Another valuable benefit that is provided by the SDH proposal is the long-term protection of Arizona's heritage by ensuring the continuation of outdoor recreation, hunting, and the preservation of natural vistas and scenic quality. Pressures on irreplaceable habitat and recreation lands have escalated in recent years, including threats of the development of solar energy facilities and further fragmentation of key habitat with roads and transmission infrastructure. Only a large-scale, pragmatic conservation effort like the SDH proposal can solve the variety of challenges that threatens this amazing landscape.

## *The Value of Open Space*

Urban planners have long touted the value that open space brings to a community both in terms of fiscal impact and in public wellbeing. Recent studies have confirmed this belief and have demonstrated that land can bring as much economic benefit when conserved as natural open space as it would if exploited for resource extraction. In particular, the area in and around the SDH proposal has limited value for minerals, but can bring incredible long-term benefit to the communities in the West Valley if protected as open space. Some of the benefits of natural open space include:

- **Value for Residents:** Arizona continues to be a fast-growing state and our public lands have become an increasingly valuable resource. Open space in the desert only enhances the value of nearby real estate for those who want to live and work near the beautiful Sonoran Desert.<sup>1</sup>
- **Economic Development:** The Arizona Game and Fish Department and the Outdoor Industry Association cite that wildlife-related and active outdoor recreation revenue in Arizona—from activities like hunting, photography, bird watching, hiking, and camping—regularly totals more than Arizona’s famed golf and baseball spring training revenues combined: nearly \$5 billion in services and retail sales annually.<sup>2</sup>
- **Preservation of Military Facilities:** With over 7,000 employees and a financial impact of over \$2.1 billion annually, Luke Air Force Base is critical to the state of Arizona’s economic viability. Together with the 8 other military installations that train in air space over western Maricopa County, the economic impact to Arizona communities from military stations totals approximately \$9 billion.<sup>3</sup>

*"We couldn't be more pleased with this proposal, as it gives added natural value to why prospective buyers want to live in western Maricopa County."*

Larry Yount of LKY Development Company Inc.

With these considerations, conserving these federal lands west of the Phoenix metropolitan area has significant promise for the future of the West Valley. Unlike the communities to the East of Phoenix that are virtually surrounded by conserved public lands like the McDowell Mountain Preserve, South Mountain, and the Tonto National Forest, the West Valley could benefit from permanent open space which will help define the edge of the built environment and provide amenities for future residents. While there are some conserved lands in the West Valley including the Sonoran Desert National Monument and the Maricopa County Parks System, a large landscape of open space protected to sustain outdoor recreation and natural values, will greatly contribute to the economic success of the community.

### *Conserving the Military Mission*

Luke Air Force Base (LAFB) and the Barry M. Goldwater bombing range have long been fixtures in West Valley community. For generations, pilots have relied on military training routes (MTRs) that extend from Luke AFB to the bombing range south of Gila Bend. These MTRs were historically over natural desert terrain, allowing training missions to occur with little conflict with other uses. Over time, rapid growth around LAFB and encroachment into critical MTRs resulted in a rise in resident complaints about airplane noise and increased concerns about the potential for plane crashes into developed areas. In 2005, the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) committee chose to keep Luke AFB open

*"It's very easy for us to support this project because it's supporting the mission of the base."*

Ron Sites, Fighter Country Partnership

<sup>1</sup> Report: Prosperity in the 21st Century West: The Role of Protected Public Lands. Sonoran Institute, 2009

<sup>2</sup> Backcountry Bounty: Hunters, Anglers, and Prosperity in the American West. Sonoran Institute and Teddy Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

<sup>3</sup> Arizona Commerce Authority: Economic Impact of Arizona’s Principal Military Operations, 2008



## Luke Air Force Base Flight Patterns

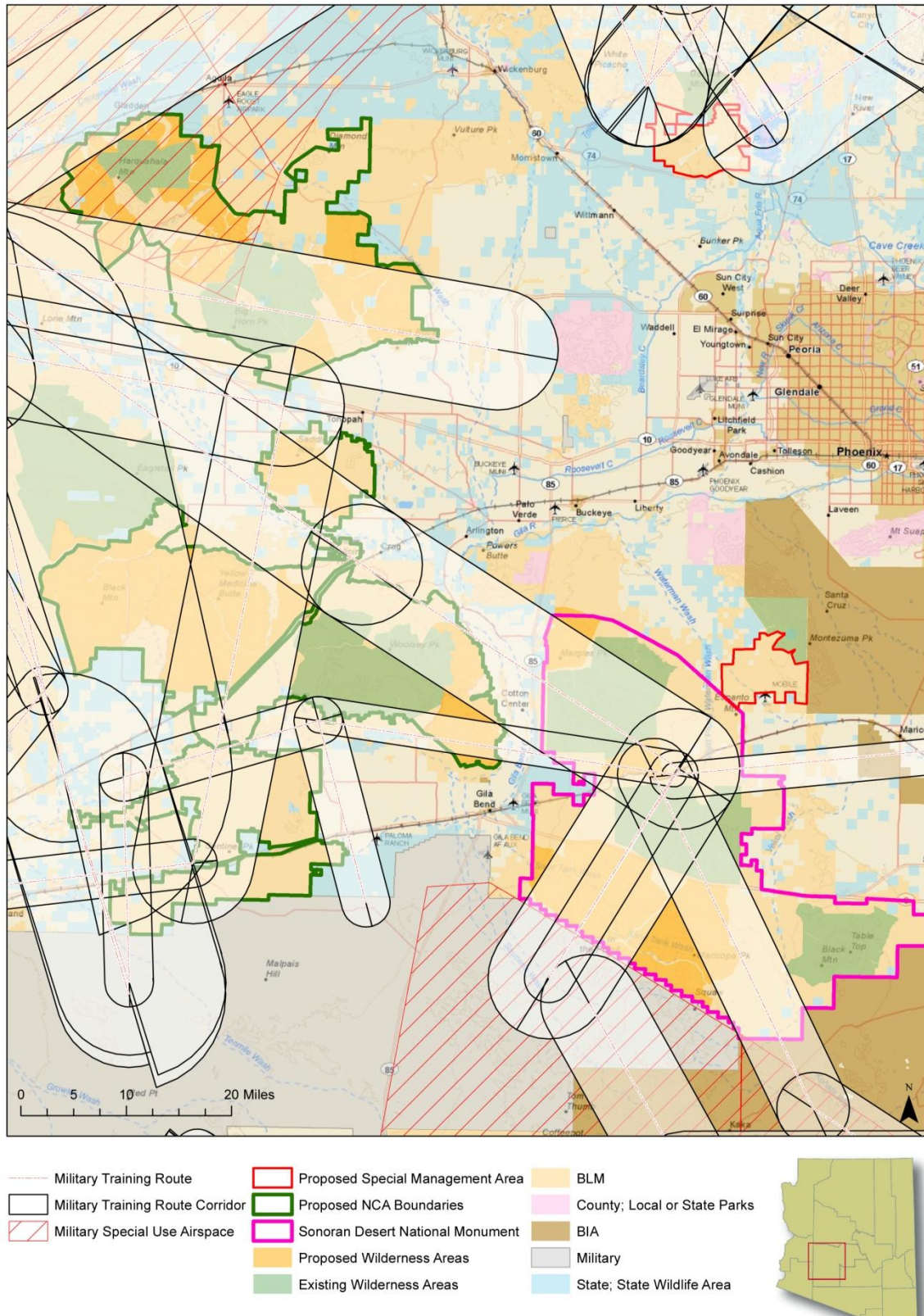


Figure 1: The Sonoran Desert Heritage proposal protects key Military Training Routes from encroachment.

after West Valley communities joined together to correct major issues that threatened its long-term viability.

Fighter Country Partnership, a non-profit organization that advocates for Luke Air Force Base, supports the proposal because it provides a necessary buffer to the Barry M. Goldwater Range and protects the Military Training Routes (MTRs) that allow Luke to be the premier military training facility for the F-16 fighter and the future home of the F-35.

Economically, all military installations in Arizona contribute \$9 billion to the state's economy, while Luke AFB alone provides about \$2.1 billion<sup>4</sup>. One of FCP's major responsibilities is to keep Luke and the Barry M. Goldwater Range off of the Department of Defense's closure list. FCP is constantly on the front lines of major land use initiatives, evaluating municipal plans that could impact the facilities and federal land policy to ensure that military operations can continue in the West Valley. The Sonoran Desert Heritage effort is pleased to have the endorsement of FCP to ensure that Luke AFB and the Barry M. Goldwater range continue to have viable operations, contributing both to national security and to the local economy long into the future.

Some major benefits that the SDH conservation effort will provide LAFB and the Barry M. Goldwater range include:

- Protection of lands under critical military training routes (MTRs) to ensure a viable connection between LAFB and the Barry M. Goldwater range
- Retaining wildlife connectivity between the Barry M. Goldwater range and surrounding natural areas will help protect the facility from becoming a refuge of last resort for threatened or endangered species. Should these animals seek refuge on the range, operations may be hampered by efforts to protect the dwindling animal populations.
- The conservation of this large landscape of federal lands will send a strong message to the Department of Defense; telling them that Arizona is serious about protecting the viability of our military installations. A statement like that may be vital to the preservation of Luke AFB in the next round of BRAC closures.

### *Protection of Natural Values*

The third major benefit that the Phoenix region will see with the implementation of the Sonoran Desert Heritage campaign is the long term protection of natural values and Arizona's outdoor heritage. The Sonoran Desert Heritage (SDH) effort began as a simple vision to protect the connectivity of natural habitat in BLM lands from Lake Pleasant through the Harquahala and Belmont Mountains, south through the Gila Bend Mountains, and then east through the Sonoran Desert National Monument and into the Sierra Estrella Mountains. Today there is a fairly contiguous connection where desert-dwelling animals like bighorn sheep, Sonoran desert tortoise, mule deer, and javelina can migrate from place to place in search of forage and water resources, mates, and suitable dwelling habitat.

Wilderness areas that were protected in the 1990 Arizona Desert Wilderness Act provide the anchor points for the conservation plan (shown in dark gold on the map, Figure 2), connecting them with new

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<sup>4</sup> Arizona Commerce Authority: Economic Impact of Arizona's Principal Military Operations, 2008



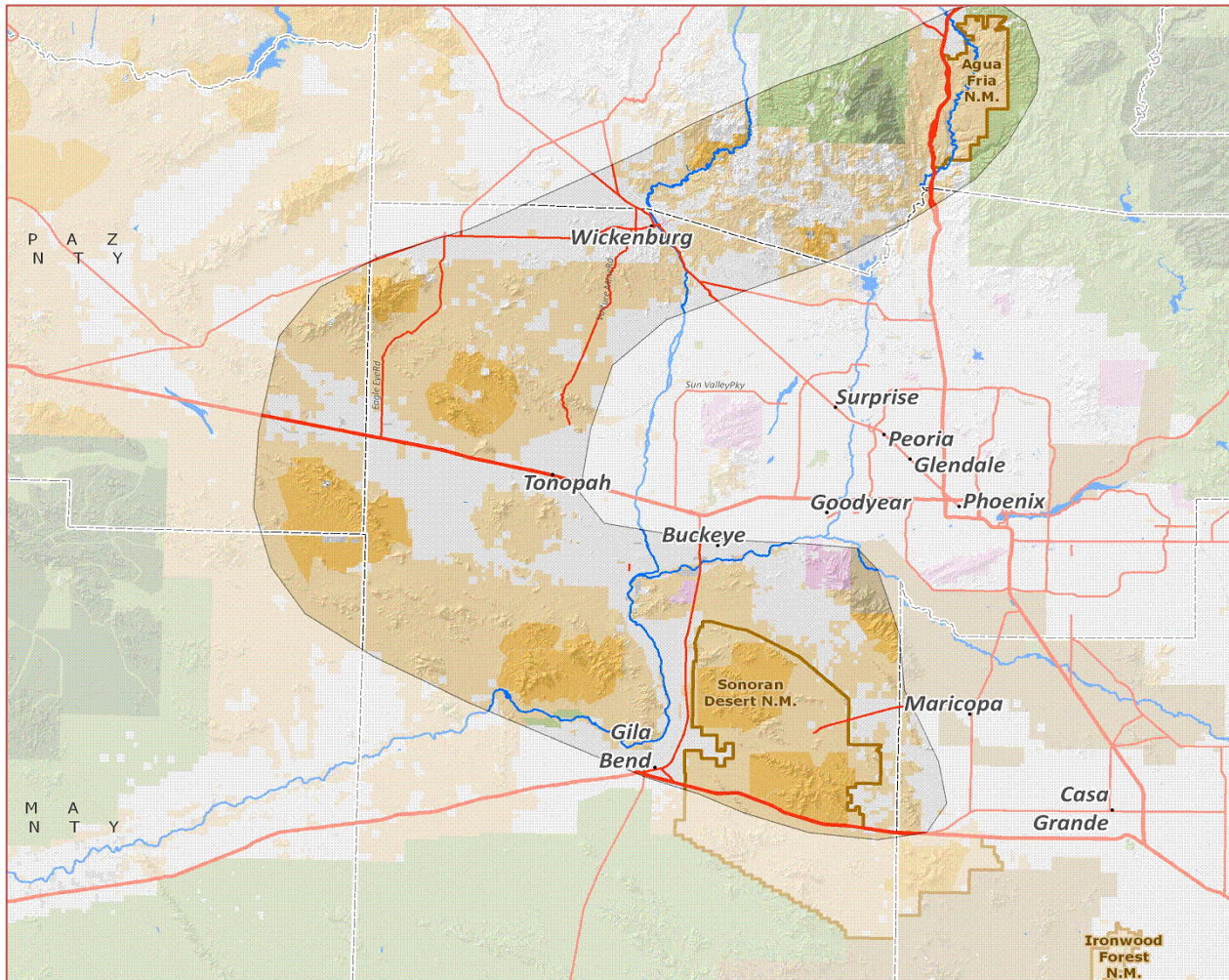


Figure 2: An original concept map of the SDH proposal shows the network of BLM lands that merit landscape-level protection.

protected lands to preserve the historic corridors that wild animals rely on to sustain their existence. Today, these wild populations are often sustained by human intervention in the form of wildlife waters, food deposits, and wildlife crossings over certain large infrastructure impediments. In the near future, as Arizona continues to grow and these habitats are further fragmented and denuded of wild character, these wild animals will either suffer possible extinction, or will require significant human intervention, resulting in significant costs to the community both directly and through a loss of revenues from the hunting, outdoor recreation, and wildlife viewing sectors.

### ***Development Trends***

As of 2006, the Town of Buckeye, the nearest incorporated town, abutting some of the lands on the northern edge of the proposal, had over 330,000 entitled single-family homes in over 30 master-planned communities throughout the Town. Many of these homes lie in what was once federal land west of the White Tank Mountains and north of I-10 which, together with other lands in the Town, may reach a projected population of nearly 2 million residents. Additionally, the communities of Surprise, Goodyear, Peoria, and unincorporated Maricopa County will grow and bring additional fragmentation and pressure to these valuable landscapes including a significant increase in OHV use and proximate urban development.

The recent downturn in the economy and housing market, while impacting the prosperity of western Maricopa County, is not anticipated to significantly slow future development. In a recent study by the Morrison Institute for Public Policy titled “Watering the Sun Corridor”, growth is projected to continue to an expected 7.8 million people, up 82% from the current 4.9 million that live in the Tucson, Phoenix and Prescott regions today<sup>5</sup>. This increase, although down significantly from projections only four years ago, still demonstrate the popularity of Arizona for future residents. Whatever the case, Arizona will grow, placing additional pressures on natural areas and recreation, further fragmenting habitat, destroying rare cultural resources, harming the mission of military facilities, and deteriorating the way of life of millions of Arizonans. The Sonoran Desert Heritage proposal intends to solve this problem, at least for a section of land at greatest risk in Western Maricopa County, directly in the path of growth and subject to the brunt of these threats.

*“Arizona’s development community values predicatibility and certainty. Protecting these lands now and securing them for the quiet enjoyment and accessible recreational activities of our current residents and future generations is simply the right thing to do.”*

Jacob F. Long, John F. Long Properties

## The Sonoran Desert Heritage Proposal

The SDH proposal has been constantly evolving in response to public input and feedback from user groups and stakeholders. Currently the proposal consists of two large National Conservation Areas (NCAs) and two Special Management Areas (SMAs) with new wilderness designations within the new NCAs and within the nearby Sonoran Desert National Monument. Recently the map was modified to implement concerns from the Homebuilders Association, the Town of Gila Bend, and advocates from the solar industry. Overall, the proposal includes over 600,000 acres of new designations that will help ensure a sustainable future for Sonoran desert species, hunting, OHV use, and a variety of other activities. See Figure 3 for a map of the current proposal.

## A Commitment to Community Inclusiveness

The Sonoran Desert Heritage proposal has always been intended to be a publicly driven process that incorporates the vision of the broader community into the development of the conservation plan. From the beginning, the public has been constantly involved and integrated into the creation of a plan to protect the cultural and natural legacy of Western Maricopa County. Proposal development leaders have demonstrated their passion for incorporating the needs of the users of these lands as well as those who value the lands for other, often equally important reasons. Ultimately, the end result of the conservation effort has always been envisioned as one that represents the unique opportunities of the Sonoran Desert region and the special relationship that public lands hold with all Arizonans.

Initially the organizers began to develop the proposal with a straightforward vision: to conserve a large, connected landscape of public lands in Western Maricopa County. Based up on this goal, the campaign

<sup>5</sup> “Watering the Sun Corridor”, Morrison Institute for Public Policy, 2011



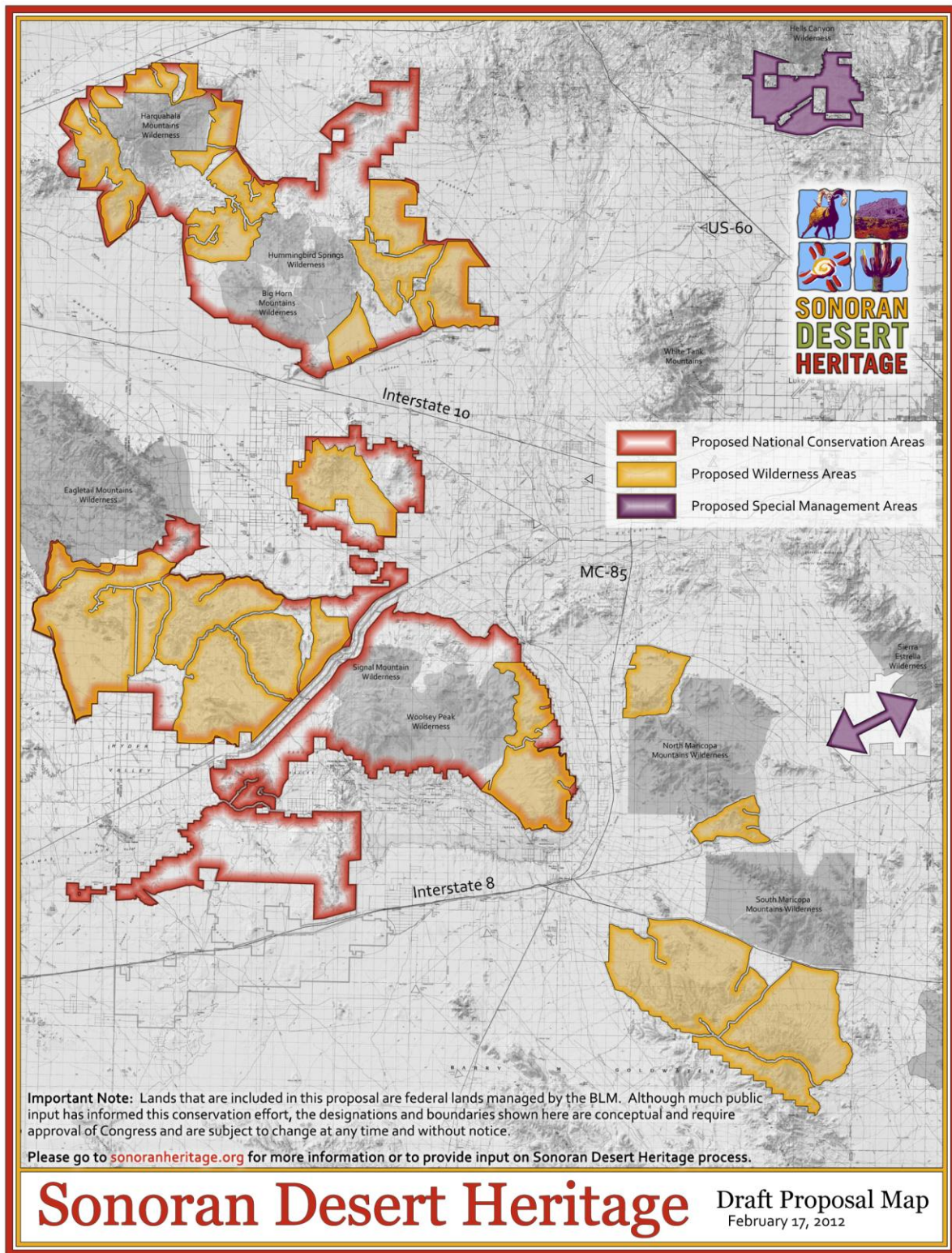


Figure 3: This recent proposal map shows significant modifications that have been made over the past year to accommodate stakeholder input.

took shape, building a large network of stakeholders and interest groups to help structure and refine the proposal. Over several years, hundreds of conversations were fostered with groups with active use of the land, leaders in the broader Phoenix community, and those with concern about the sustainability of the Sonoran Desert ecoregion. The primary objective of this early outreach was to determine three things:

1. The level of support from leaders in the community;
2. Major factors that should be incorporated into a landscape level conservation effort;  
and
3. The overall views of the public with regard to conservation in the Phoenix Metropolitan Area.

Because of the size and complexity of the concept proposal, outreach was performed in stages, first to develop a reasonably pragmatic concept and then to refine it based upon input from a diverse group of stakeholders, primarily from the areas around the conservation lands. As it is practically impossible to discuss the issue with every individual whom may see benefit or hindrance from the conservation effort, the focus was placed on community leaders whom would be likely to have a good understanding of how such a large-scale effort may impact their constituencies. As a result, during the early stages of the campaign, the major outreach team including representatives from the Sonoran Institute (SI), Arizona Wilderness Coalition (AWC), The Wilderness Society (TWS), and the Arizona Wildlife Federation (AWF), worked with a variety of community leaders including public officials, business owners, developers, members of congress, and special interest groups to help develop the proposal. Based on comments received through this process, the proposal was refined, boundaries were adjusted, and letters of support were collected from dozens of leaders who saw the real benefits from a large, landscape-level conservation effort. During this process, additional stakeholders were identified, broadening the input and developing a large network of supporters across a wide spectrum of interests in the affected area.

## Supporters

As with any conservation effort, especially one as large and comprehensive as the Sonoran Desert Heritage, there is a diverse range of values and perspectives that must be taken into account. With this in mind, organizers began to reach out to a variety of stakeholders to both inform and receive input on the effort, including comments that could both inform the details of the conservation plan, and those that may direct the strategy of the proposal. A number of letters have been received including those from a variety of stakeholders. These letters largely supported both the conservation process, and in many cases supported the proposal specifically. Each letter is nuanced to some degree, although for purposes of the campaign they are considered letters of support. A description and list of the major categories of supporters is included below. Letters from community leaders and organizations are included in Appendix I.



Figure 4: This partial list of supporters shows the broad base of stakeholders that see value in this landscape-level conservation effort.

### Developers:

A number of developers in the West Valley were approached to discuss the project including Sunbelt Holdings, LKY Development, and DMB Inc.; developers of Douglas Ranch, Belmont, and Verrado, respectively. In general, developers saw the benefits of having conservation lands near their projects, providing valuable amenities and views for future residents. Natural landscapes near development projects contribute greatly to the desirability of the project for homebuyers and investors, as well as providing for opportunities for healthy recreation by connecting the projects to natural areas via a network of multiple-use paths and trails.

*“You can’t have a healthy economy without a healthy environment, and I’m proud of the effort we’ve made here. It’s really a testimony to how this process should work. The final product is something everyone can be proud of.”*

John Graham, SunBelt Holdings

### Developers who have submitted a letter of support for the SDH process:

Developer (Past and Present)	Signer
DMB Inc.	Karrin Taylor
El Dorado Holdings	Mike Ingram, Tom Hennessy
John F. Long Properties	Jacob F. Long
LKY Development Company, Inc.	Larry K. Yount
Land Advisors Organization	Greg Vogel
Sunbelt Holdings	John Graham
SunCor	Steve Betts



***Faith-Based Organizations:***

In an effort to broaden the reach of public input, coalition members approached a variety of faith-based organizations for input. In recent times, many religious organizations have become more concerned about conservation issues, recognizing the need for natural landscapes for clean, healthy recreation and spiritual renewal. In collaboration with the Arizona Ecumenical Council Earth Care Commission and the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program, a number of churches from a variety of faiths were approached; many of which signed statements or letters to support the SDH process.

*"I am happy to extend my support for the Sonoran Desert Heritage conservation effort and hope that those who enjoy these lands will think of the grandeur of their Creator and the love He extends to them."*

Keenan Ward, Pastor of the Church of God, Avondale, AZ

**Faith-based organizations that have submitted a letter of support for the SDH process:*****Faith-based Organization***

Avondale Church of God  
 Celebration Lutheran Church  
 Community Church of Buckeye  
 Desert Palm Presbyterian, Sun City  
 Dove of the Desert United Methodist Church  
 Faith Presbyterian Church, Sun City  
 First Christian Church, Glendale  
 Foothills Christian Church  
 Foothills Christian Church, Glendale  
 Lakeview United Methodist Church, Sun City  
 Peace Lutheran Church, Peoria  
 St. Christopher's in the West Valley  
 St. Christopher's in the West Valley , Peoria  
 St. Thomas More Catholic Parish, Glendale  
 Peace Lutheran Church

***Municipalities:***

Municipalities in the West Valley stand to gain significantly from the conservation of these federal lands by protecting long-term financial benefit from sustained outdoor recreation activities and the preservation of military installations like Luke Air Force Base and the Barry M. Goldwater Range. Several officials in West Valley cities have submitted a letter of support for the SDH proposal over the last few years including:

*"I believe that this effort to identify some of the most sensitive and pristine public lands for permanent protection embodies the spirit of responsible land use policy while embracing appropriate resource management and recreational opportunities that will benefit generations to come."*

Mary Rose Wilcox, Maricopa County Commissioner

**Municipal leaders who have submitted a letter of support for the SDH process:*****Municipality (Past and Present)******Name***

City of Goodyear, Mayor

James Cavanaugh

**Municipal leaders who have submitted a letter of support for the SDH process:**

<b><i>Municipality (Past and Present)</i></b>	<b><i>Name</i></b>
City of Surprise, Mayor	Lyn Truitt
Town of Buckeye, Mayor	Jackie Meck
Town of Gila Bend, Mayor	Fred Hull
Town of Wickenburg, Mayor	Ron Badowski
City of Peoria, Mayor	Bob Barrett
Maricopa County Supervisor	Mary Rose Wilcox

***Environmental and Conservation Organizations:***

Recognizing the benefits of the SDH proposal, a number of environmental and conservation organizations have submitted support letters for the effort including:

**Conservation organizations that have submitted a letter of support for the SDH process:**

<b><i>Organization</i></b>
Arizona Zoological Society/ Phoenix Zoo
Friends of Sonoran Desert National Monument
Friends of Saddle Mountain
Phoenix Mountain Preservation Council Inc.
Wildlife World Zoo
Republicans for Environmental Protection
International Dark Sky Association
Sierra Club-Grand Canyon Chapter
National Trust for Historic Preservation

***Regional Businesses:***

The SDH proposal has good numbers to support how well conservation can support business objectives. From time-to-time the opportunity presents itself to sell the values of the proposal to regional and national businesses and advocates which see the value of protecting these federal lands. The following have provided letters of support:

*"Our 43-year-old business-based environmental public interest organization advocates a balance between economic development and environmental quality. This initiative is a significant step towards advancing these goals in the West Valley."*

Diane Brossart, Executive Director, Valley Forward

**Regional businesses that have submitted a letter of support for the SDH process:**

<b><i>Organization (Past and Present)</i></b>	<b><i>Name</i></b>
Valley Forward	Diane Brossart
CB Diversified	Tim Bidwill
Abengoa Solar Inc.	Kate Maracas
Arizona Corporation Commission	Paul Neuman, Kris Mayes
NextEra Energy Resources, LLC	Matthew Handel

***Small Businesses:***

Locally-owned, small businesses have also weighed in on the Sonoran Desert Heritage proposal. Recognizing the value that the proposal can bring the West Valley, supportive businesses include:

**Small businesses that have submitted a letter of support for the SDH process:**

Baker Wee	Le Hair	Aneta's Alterations
Reta Smoke	Silva's Beauty and Barber	Peoria Florist
Cellulodency Store	High Altitude Ink	Sleep Source
Carroll's Foreign Bars	All-Star Musicians Box	Kelly Restoration and Home
Jessy James Smoke Shop	Angel's Tuxedos	Kelly Automotive
Lewis Interiors	Body Envy Botique	Custom Fit Lab
Symply Sheery	AZ Small Dog Rescue	Anna's Fine Dry Cleaners
Bianco Billy's Pizza	Mighty Cup and Spoon	Fresco Realty
Over the Rainbow Children's	Nic Your Skin Tattoo	Smoke N Stuff
Smoke and More	Glendale Auto Care	Tacos Cuaise
N and H Smoke Shop	Jimbo's	Carpet Corner
Water N Zen	Clara's Neat Repeat	The Glendale Shade Co.
Watertyme	The Dented Can	Wild Birds Unlimited
Keen Edge, Inc.	Bark and Purr Pet Grooming	Ragazza Botique
Double Down Tattoo	Powell Chiropractic	

***Military Interests:***

One of the major benefits that the SDH proposal provides is the protection of critical corridors that host military training routes that serve training missions involving the Barry M. Goldwater Range. The proposal also ensures continued wildlife connectivity to the range, reducing the likelihood that critical military installations will become a refuge of last resort for threatened and endangered species. Recognizing the benefits of this proposal, the following have provided letters of support to the SDH proposal:

**Organizations with military interests that have submitted a letter of support for the SDH process:**

<b><i>Organization</i></b>	<b><i>Name</i></b>
Luke Air Force Base	James (Rusty) Mitchell
Fighter Country Partnership	Ron Sites

***Other Organizations***

Organizers have been working in the communities closest to the effected lands in an effort to gather as much input as possible. A variety of organizations have been consulted on the SDH proposal including citizen groups like rotary clubs, chambers of commerce, and hiking and photography groups. SDH organizers have worked extensively in the community to address as many different interests as possible to ensure that the public has an adequate voice in the process.

*"Open spaces and recreational opportunities are always on the forefront of the Arizona State Horsemen Association's radar, and we will support and aid in your endeavors to preserve your vision."*

Chip Wilson, Arizona State Horsemen Association

***Citizens***

The SDH process has been very open and transparent, reaching out to communities and providing opportunities for input on the proposal website. Additionally, efforts have been made to gain media



coverage so that the public is adequately informed and is given every opportunity to provide input on the process. To date a large number of comments have been received and have been incorporated into the project, where possible. SDH organizers are confident that an adequate and transparent outreach effort has been implemented and that major issues have been discovered and resolved.

In October and November of 2011, five open houses were conducted in the West Valley in the communities in close proximity to the proposal, including Buckeye, Tonopah, Wickenburg, Avondale, and Surprise. The intent of the meetings was to incorporate the needs and concerns of the local community into the process. At the meetings, each attendee was briefed on the proposal and given the opportunity to fill out a comment form or suggest modifications to the proposal map. Overall the meetings were well attended and provided an opportunity for local communities to voice their input on the proposal.

In an effort to find non-traditional supporters for wilderness conservation, organizers asked attendees of the Arizona Game and Fish Expo if they would support the protection of new wilderness areas in Arizona. In four days, over 350 signatures were gathered from hunters, outdoor enthusiasts, and other people who love Arizona's outdoor environment. In addition, a variety of other individuals wanted to share their support for the proposal including those who attended a faith-based event called "Sonoran Stories." A complete list of signees is included in Appendix II.



Figure 5: High quality scenic vistas and recreation opportunities are par for the course within the SDH lands.

## Polling

### *Congressional District 2*

It has long been understood that Arizonans love their natural heritage. In addition to the economic benefits that conserved lands bring to their lives, many residents enjoy the outdoors through regular activities of hunting, fishing, hiking, or just watching the scenery fly by as they travel throughout the state. The SDH campaign was curious as to how well voters in Congressional District 2, one of the most conservative in the state, would support a conservation effort like the SDH proposal. In December 2010, a poll was commissioned from the conservative pollster Public Opinion Strategies. The following data resulted from the poll that had 400 respondents and a margin of error of 4.9%. The following are selected questions from the poll demonstrating the support that conservation can garner in Arizona.

- Poll: I'm going to read you a pair of statements, and please tell me which one comes closest to your own views, even if neither of the statements matches your views exactly.

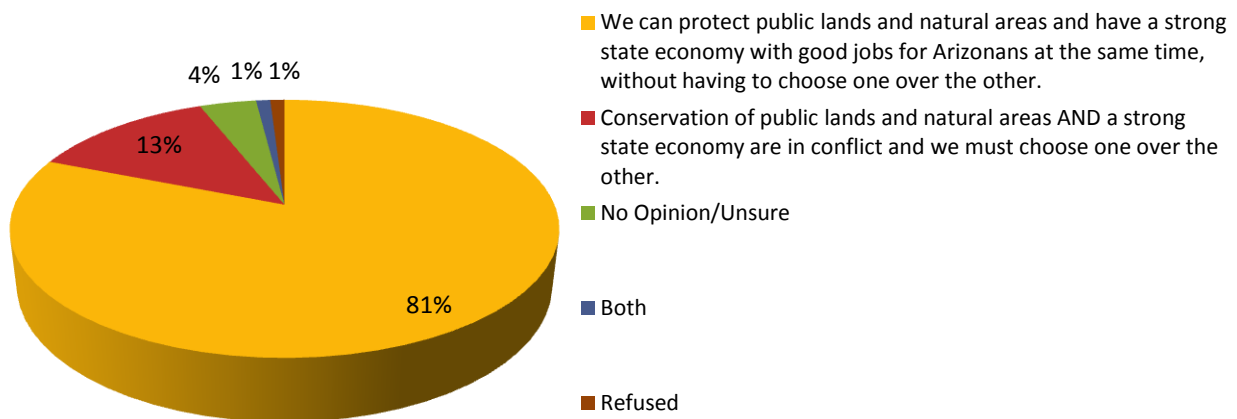
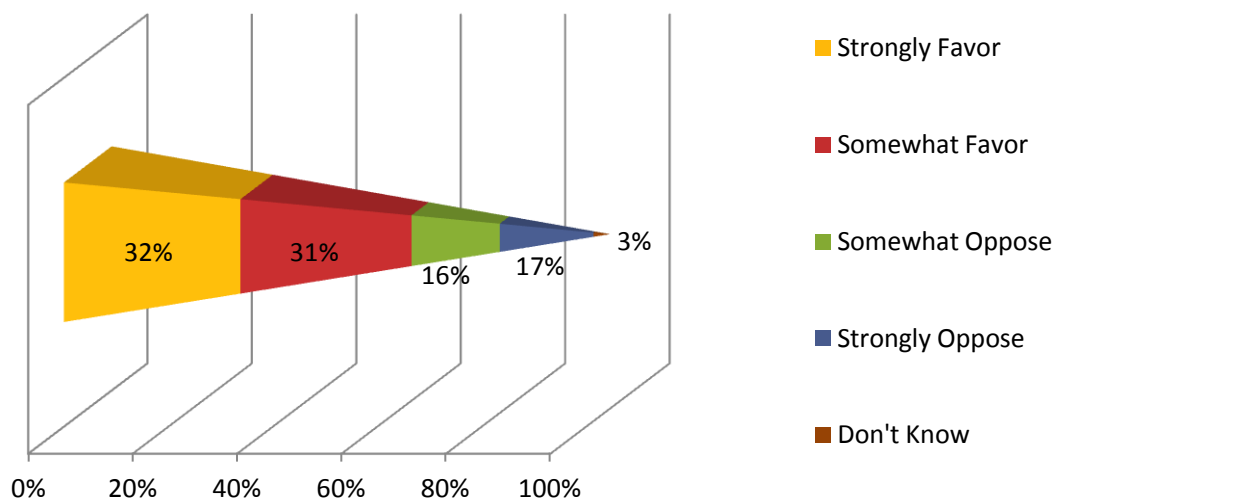


Figure 6: The Sand Tank Mountains harbor incredible scenery and wildlife habitat.

- Poll: As you may know, most of the federally-owned public lands in Arizona are managed for a variety of public uses, by the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, or Bureau of Land Management. Less than one-fifth of these federal public lands are designated as wilderness, which is the highest level of protection for public lands. Wilderness lands can be used for hiking, camping, livestock grazing, horseback riding, wildlife watching, and hunting. However, mining, oil and gas development, the use of motorized vehicles, such as all-terrain vehicles and dirt bikes, and mountain biking are not allowed on wilderness lands. **Would you favor or oppose protecting ADDITIONAL public lands as wilderness in Arizona?**



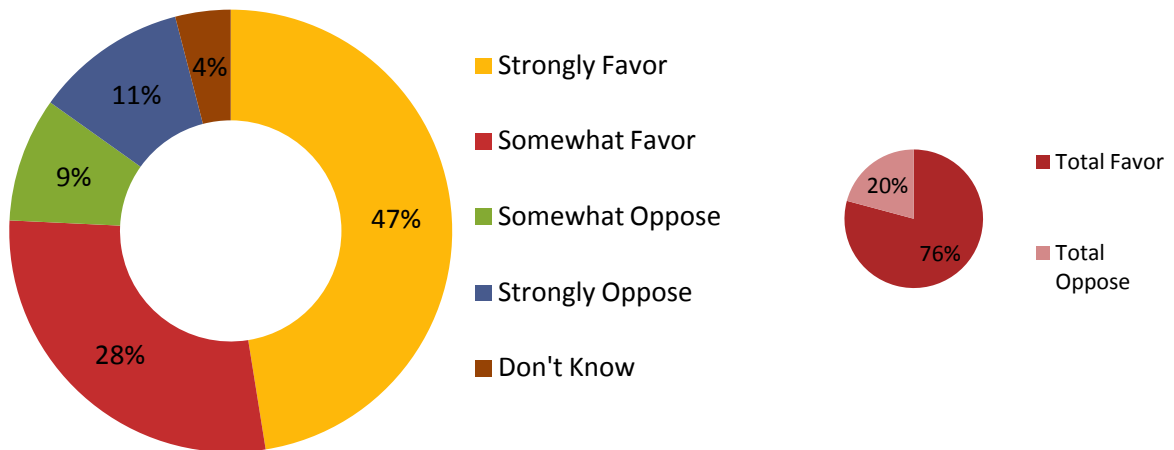
- Poll: Public lands designated as national conservation areas provide more management flexibility than wilderness. National conservation areas can be managed to allow for a broader range of uses such as all-terrain vehicles and dirt bikes, and mountain bikes along existing roads and trails. **Would you favor or oppose protecting ADDITIONAL public lands as national conservation areas in Arizona?**



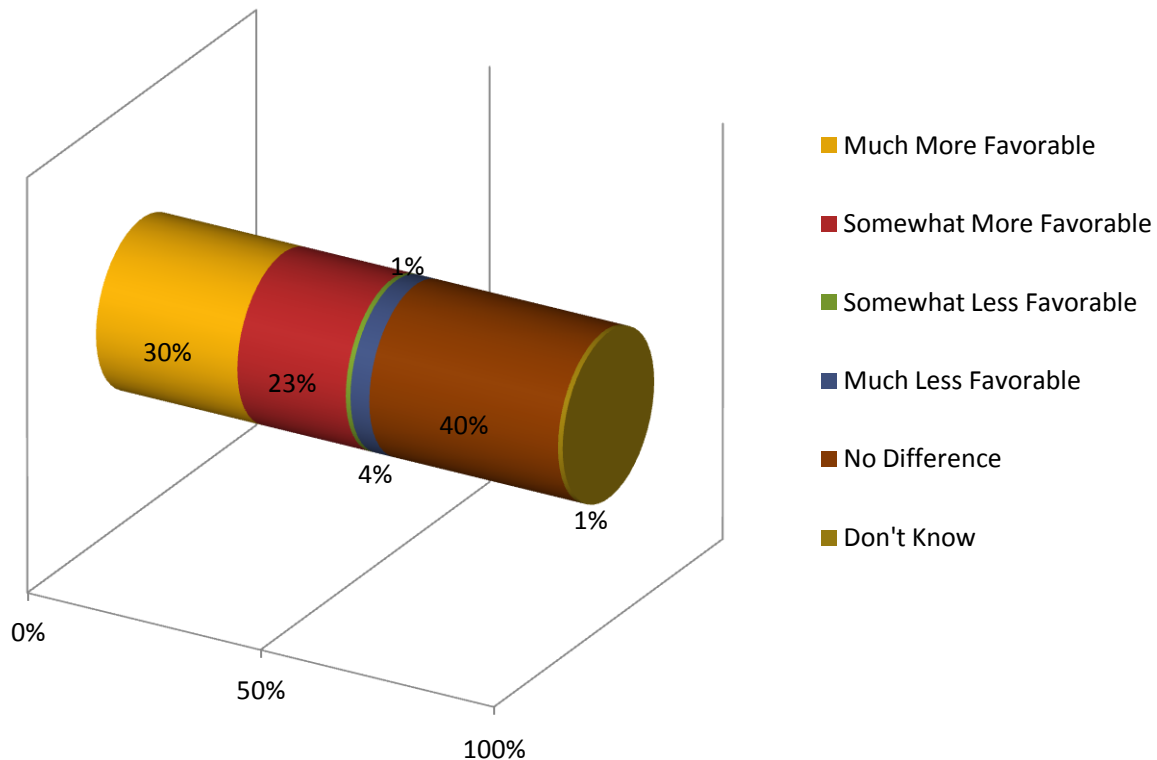
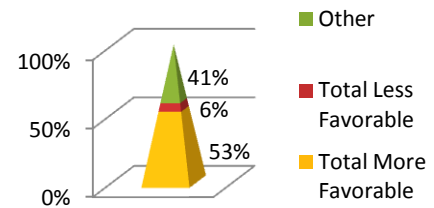
- Poll: There is a proposal being discussed to protect specific federally-owned lands in the Sonoran Desert located in western Maricopa County. This proposal would designate wilderness and national conservation areas in the West Valley, north of Interstate 8 and on both sides of Interstate 10. This proposal would protect a number of mountain ranges in the area, including the Belmont Mountains, Yellow Medicine Butte, Saddle Mountain and Columbus Peak. Under this proposal, the most



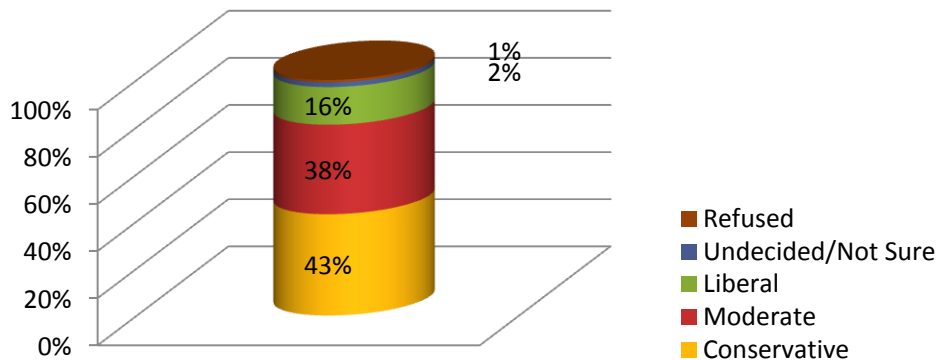
pristine areas would be protected as wilderness and some other natural areas would be protected as national conservation areas. **Based on what you have heard, would you favor or oppose this proposal?**



- Poll: Would you have a more favorable impression or a less favorable impression of your member of Congress if he worked together with leaders from other political parties to protect natural areas in the Sonoran Desert as wilderness, or would it make no difference to your impression of your member of Congress one way or the other?



- Poll: And, do you consider yourself to be...conservative, moderate...or...liberal?



Based on the polling data, there is clear support for conservation in this district. It is important to note, however, that new congressional district boundaries have been drawn although much of the rural section of the new District 4 remains the same. It is not likely that the overall feelings of residents in the community will be significantly affected.

### **Colorado College Poll**

In January, Colorado College released the results of a poll that showed broad support for conserved public lands. The “State of the Rockies Conservation in the West” poll showed that an amazing 78% of Arizona voters believe that having a strong economy and protecting land and water is compatible. The survey, performed by both Public Opinion Strategies and Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz &

***9 in 10 Arizona voters agree that public lands such as national parks, forests, monuments, and wildlife areas are “an essential part” of the state economy, and the quality of life of residents.***

Colorado College “State of the Rockies Conservation in the West” Poll

Associates, a Republican and Democratic firm respectively, showed that across the state, conservation ranks as a winning issue for the broadest spectrum of Arizona voters. The poll surveyed 2,400 registered voters in six key western states January 2 through 5 and 7, 2012 and yields a margin of error of 4.9% statewide.

### **Finding Pragmatic Solutions**

Any change to the status of federal land will affect stakeholders, many of which have a vested interest in these areas including mining, ranching, recreation, and a number of other uses that currently exist on these BLM lands. Active, meaningful discussions have been integrated into the overall outreach process and it is the hope of campaign organizers that viable solutions to real or perceived problems will be found, to limit impacts to existing users. A memo from Dave Richins of the Sonoran Institute detailing outreach to key user groups should be referenced for more information. It is the goal of the campaign organizers that the Sonoran Desert Heritage proposal will be a model for how Arizonans can come together to solve big challenges.

## Media Coverage

The SDH proposal has been widely covered by the media in the Phoenix area. A catalogue of these news stories and clippings is included in Appendix III. The following is a list of articles and coverage for print, radio, and TV sources:

Title	Source	Date
<i>700,000 acre conservation plan would preserve 'legacy of Arizona'</i>	Land Letter, EE Publishing, DC	5/26/11
<i>Major preserve Proposed for Lands West of Phoenix</i>	Public News Service Radio	5/26/11
<i>Preservation group presents plan for West Valley</i>	Daily-News Sun, Peoria/Surprise	5/26/11
<i>Coalition seeks to preserve desert</i>	Arizona Republic, Valley-State section	5/26/11
<i>Coalition seeks to preserve Sonoran Desert</i>	AP-KTAR Radio	5/26/11
<i>Politicians, developers, others propose land acquisition west of Phoenix</i>	AP-The Republic, Columbus, Indiana	5/26/11
<i>Group works to preserve Sonoran Desert</i>	West Valley View, Avondale	5/31/11
<i>Proposal a big step to preserve our open space</i>	Editorial, West Valley Edition, Arizona Republic	6/2/11
<i>Heritage plan deserves support</i>	Editorial, Arizona Republic main edition	8/21/11
<i>God wants us to care for the Earth</i>	Letter to the editor, Arizona Republic	8/28/11
<i>Public meeting ad</i>	West Valley View	11/1/11
<i>Input sought on initiative</i>	Arizona Republic, SW Valley Edition	11/2/11
<i>Input sought for area conservation</i>	Wickenburg Sun	11/2/11
<i>Coalition seeks feedback on public land conservation, protection</i>	Daily News-Sun, Peoria-Surprise	11/3/11
<i>Public meeting advertisement</i>	West Valley View	11/8/11
<i>Fighter Country Partnership backs conservation, Ron Sites</i>	Glendale Republic Op-Ed	11/9/11
<i>Conservation vital to Luke, Ron Sites</i>	Peoria Republic Op-Ed	11/9/11
<i>Fighter Country Partnership backs conservation, Ron Sites</i>	Surprise Republic Op-Ed	11/9/11
<i>Sonoran Desert Heritage Plan, Mayor Jackie Meck</i>	Buckeye Valley News, Op-Ed	
<i>Report Urges Backcountry Conservation but Skips Arizona</i>	Tucson Outdoors Blog	11/15/11
<i>Defending the desert</i>	Phoenix Magazine	January 2012
<i>Wildflower Photography Workshops</i>	Arizona Republic, Explore Arizona	2/25/12
<i>Workshops offer wild tips for shooters</i>	Daily News-Sun, Peoria-Surprise	2/29/12
<i>Photography workshop offers glimpse of wild desert, spring blooms</i>	Local First Arizona Newsletter	3/7/12



Title	Source	Date
<i>Summit sheds light on voter/candidate disconnect over environment</i>	New American Media	4/22/12
<i>Explore Arizona's Saddle Mountain</i>	KPNX Channel 12-NBC	5/18/12

## The Path Ahead

The future is bright for the Sonoran Desert Heritage proposal. Over the past year the proposal has been modified to reflect the input that has been received from a variety of stakeholders, resulting in a new map and revised bill language. Every effort has been made to bring together divergent voices to resolve some of the longstanding concerns that have plagued special designations over the past twenty years, allowing the SDH conservation plan to become a new and different approach that can be supported by the widest variety of interest groups. The campaign is now at a place where it needs support of a bipartisan group of congressional representatives to resolve any final problems and then introduce a bill in Washington. With the support that the campaign can muster, and the will of the Arizona congressional delegation, there is no reason why the Sonoran Desert Heritage effort cannot be a model for how a community can join together to solve big problems.



Figure 7: Opportunities for quiet recreation abound in the lands proposed for conservation.